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**LATTA, SAMUEL RANKIN**  
**(1827-1910)**  
**PAPERS**  
**1848-1862**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Samuel Rankin Latta Papers, 1848-1862, are centered around Samuel R. Latta (1827-1910), and family members, including Mary (Guthrie) Latta (1833-1920). Of Irish descent, Samuel R. Latta was reared in Pennsylvania and moved to Dyersburg, Tennessee, where he was a lawyer, teacher, Mason, Captain in the 13<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Regiment C.S.A., Elder of the Presbyterian Church, and Sunday school superintendent. The Papers were donated by Mrs. Richard Leow, Sr., of Dyersburg, Tennessee.

The materials in this finding aid measure .42 cubic feet. There are no restrictions on the materials. Single photocopies of unpublished writings in the Samuel Rankin Latta Papers may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Samuel Rankin Latta Papers, consisting of 4 volumes and 32 items, and spanning the years 1848-1862, are composed of correspondence and journals. A biographical sketch of Samuel R. Latta may be found in Speer's *Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans*.

The item of earliest date in the collection is volume I of the journal kept by Samuel R. Latta. Beginning on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on December 2, 1848, he wrote a personal account of his life in the journal and continued the practice for nine years. The last entry, on September 24, 1857, tells of the burial of his brother, James M. Latta.

The journals provide one with considerable information about Latta's personal life, especially during his young adult years; reminiscence of childhood in New Alexandria, Pennsylvania; his early teaching position in Youngstown, Ohio; his educational experience at Washington College; descriptions of several churches he attended; his first romance; his transfer to Jefferson College, Kennesburg, Pennsylvania; his censure by the Blairsville Presbyterian Church; his journey to Dyersburg, Tennessee; the opening of his new school; his marriage to Mary Guthrie, on December 9, 1852; the birth of his first child; and his early law practice.

There are 32 letters in the collection from June of 1861 to April of 1862, all of which are personal correspondence between family members during the Civil War. Twenty letters are from Capt. Samuel R. Latta, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Regiment C.S.A., to his wife, Mary (Guthrie) Latta while stationed at various camps in the Confederacy. There is a photocopy of a lengthy letter from Capt. Latta to his wife on April 10, 1862, which is a detailed account of his involvement in the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee (the original copy is in the manuscript section at the University of Tennessee).

Three letters are from John G. Latta to his brother, Samuel, who was living in Boston, Massachusetts, during the outbreak of the Civil War. The letters relate his desire to move his family to Tennessee, despite the risk it would entail.

The Papers, although limited in number, reveal interesting biographical information about the character and accomplishments of this northern itinerate school teacher, and how he came to adopt the South. The Papers end before Samuel's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday. For further research, see Speer's *Sketches*; and the *Ansearchin' News* (Vol. 27, no. 4, p. 160) account of the Golden Wedding Anniversary (1902) of Samuel and Mary Latta.

## CONTAINER LIST

### **Box 1**

1. Correspondence – Latta, John G.
2. Correspondence – Latta, Mary (Guthrie)
3. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
4. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
5. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
6. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
7. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
8. Correspondence – Latta, Samuel R.
9. Correspondence – Wallace, Beck
10. Journals – Latta, Samuel R., Vol. I
11. Journals – Latta, Samuel R., Vol. II
12. Journals – Latta, Samuel R., Vol. III
13. Journals – Latta, Samuel R., Vol. IV

## NAME INDEX

This is a name index of only the correspondence in the Samuel Rankin Latta Papers, together with the dates of the letters and information regarding their contents. The figures in parentheses denote the number of letters, if more than one. The last numbers refer to the box and folder in which the material is to be found.

- Latta, John G. to (Father) John Latta, 1861, re: from Boston, Mass.; family and health matters; Tennessee will decide whether or not to secede from the Union tomorrow; news from Boston, 1-1
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to (Mother) Lucinda (Gilcrist) Latta, 1861, re: from Boston; family news; will move to Tennessee in September; sorrow about father's illness; Mary had a baby girl; the Battle of Bull Run, also the Battle of Springfield, Missouri, 1-1
- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to (brother) Samuel R. Latta, 1861, re: from Boston; father's illness; surprise that you would doubt my intentions to move south; Mary is not ready to travel; the Peace party; newspapers that have been branded as Confederate sympathizers, 1-1
- Latta, Mary (Guthrie) (6) to Samuel R. Latta, 1861-1862, re: from Dyersburg, Tennessee; personal and family matters; health of family and children; Samuel's parents; disappointment about husband's transfer from Camp Randolph; beginning to feel the terrible realities of war; cousin Beck; Samuel's brother John has moved to the country to be a farmer; Samuel's furlough; little news reaches Dyersburg; accidental burn to Kati; mother Lucinda's birthday, turned 70 years old; urges husband not to reenlist when term of duty ends in 1862, 2-1
- Latta, Samuel R. (20) to Mary Latta, 1861, re: personal and family matters; sorrow over leaving her the day before; speaks highly of his Company; from steamer Ben McCullough; Capt. Whitman's Company; Col. Wright; saw Gen. Pillow; conditions at camp; attends several church services; nine year wedding anniversary; from Fort Wright; Mr. Hibbets and Mr. Watkins, who were mail carriers; received uniform; his Company is increasing in number; received marching orders to leave July 27<sup>th</sup>; from New Madrid, Missouri; at headquarters of the "Army of Liberation;" drilling soldiers in hot weather; describes a two day march; compliments himself about his stamina and good health; glad to hear about cousin Beck's visit; from Saxton, Missouri; from Sikeston, Missouri; may attack Birds Point; arrived in Sikeston from Benton and camped; the sick are moved to New Madrid; from Columbus, Kentucky; marched through Hickman; exchanged shots between gun-boat and batteries at Hickman; suffering from sickness at Camp Columbus; return to camp after furlough; Col. Vaughn; building huts for the winter months; homesickness at Camp Columbus; characteristics of his son and daughter; Tom Buchanan (his bunk mate) brought a light feather bed; two lieutenants resign due to bad health; no furlough as long as possibility of being attacked; Mason and Slidell incident aboard a British steamer; England and France may declare war on the Union; Christmas greetings; Buchanan appointed as

new lieutenant; lightly rebukes wife for not writing more; whole division may soon be moved; (1862) from Fort Columbus; passing the time whittling; sick from exhaustion and conditions; the enemy is closing in; homesick for news from home; from Corinth, Mississippi; a detailed account of the Battle of Shiloh, Tennessee (copy), folders 3-8, box 1

Wallace, Beck (3) to (cousin) Samuel R. Latta, 1861, re: from Macon; family news; mentions Dr. Rhea, from Macon; Mr. Dorigan, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. from Macon; will visit Dyersburg soon; hosted a concert in her home and gave proceeds to the Southern Mothers in Memphis; visited Mary Latta and family in Dyersburg, 9-1